



29-11

TROTSKY, COLL.

SUBJECT FILE

SPAIN - HISTORY - CIVIL WAR,
1936 - 1939

SHALL THE INTERNATIONAL PROLETARIAT GIVE MATERIAL AID TO THE
SPANISH LOYALIST GOVERNMENT?

(Statement of the Baltimore Group)
I

The Spanish Revolution is in a serious crisis. The recent fall of Bilbao, the military victories of Franco, the aid of German and Italian capitalism together with the connivance of "Democratic" England, France, and Stalinist Russia (not forgetting U.S. Imperialism) attest to the fact that if events continue their present course, the Spanish proletariat will suffer the same fate as the German and Austrian. More, it would be a blow at the international proletariat, resulting in a further reactionary trend in the U.S.S.R., and hasten the outbreak of the coming imperialist war.

A victory for the forces of Spanish capitalism, whether a Fascist dictatorship of Franco or a military dictatorship of the Loyalist government, on the one hand, or, a victory of the Spanish proletariat and the establishment of a Soviet Dictatorship, on the other, will undoubtedly sharpen the class-struggle in the U.S.A.--however, a capitalist victory in Spain will stimulate the American bourgeoisie into taking the offensive, while the revolutionary vanguard would be greatly demoralized.

The duty of revolutionists is to analyse world events, give practical solutions to the proletariat, and draw the necessary conclusions from these events. There is still time for us to do this. We must, as internationalists, aid the Spanish proletariat attain its victory--the establishment of its revolutionary dictatorship. This can only be achieved by its adoption of a clear-cut Marxist program and disassociating itself from the reformists, centrists, and popular frontists of all shades.

II

When we entered the Socialist Party we misjudged the objective situation; the Spanish Revolution and the Moscow Trials. It may be human to misjudge the objective historical situation and to err, but it is nowhere said, except perhaps in the writings of centrists and capitulators, that having failed to evaluate the objective situation correctly, having failed to foresee a revolution, we should completely ignore it when it arrives.

The fact that we ignored the Spanish Revolution - to the extent, of course, that it could be ignored without producing an explosion in our ranks, is beyond serious dispute. However, despite the facts, the leadership will undoubtedly try to maintain that it did conduct a campaign on Spain. A brief review of our history since we entered the Party will not only make this task more difficult for the leadership, but it will reveal that it is guilty of not merely "an adaptation to centrism", but of capitulation to centrism.

The Revolution occurred when the Party was in the midst of its election campaign. We were engaged in the tactic of 'integration', and in the leadership's opinion, nothing, not even the Spanish Revolution, took precedence to 'integration.' All demands that we launch a campaign to send arms to the Spanish workers were ignored, or met with the refrain "we must wait until the elections are over."

The demands of the comrades for a campaign on arms to the Spanish workers grow more insistent after the elections were over. Accordingly, a campaign was launched to make the Party adopt the slogan "Arms for Spain".* This campaign was uncoordinated and weak. Nevertheless, the slogan immediately received so much national support that it forced Altman to announce the formation of the Debs Column. Leaving aside for a moment the question of arming the Column which was never raised, let us remember a very important thing. Although virtually the entire N.Y. leadership was present at the membership meeting where the formation of the Column was announced, and where Thomas stated that "the formation of the Debs Column isn't a one half as romantic as 'Arms for Spain'", not one of our leaders rose to reply to Thomas and to state our position.

The formation of the Debs Column posed two important questions for us: Shall we continue our campaign for the adoption of the slogan 'Arms for Spain'? And, Shall we agitate for the assignment of the Column to the Stalinist, Socialist, Anarchist or POUM militias, or to the legal bourgeois Popular Front Government?

Without taking a complete position on Spain and fighting for it, an answer to these questions is inconceivable. For a fight on the Spanish issue raises all our principled positions, and flowing from this, the question of a perspective and the possibility of a split. The question that faced the leadership then, was: raise the Spanish issue and fight for a complete position, or, drop it and capitulate. The leadership - capitulated! Without another word the slogan 'Arms for Spain' was dropped, the question to which party assign the Column was never raised and that is worse, we assisted Altman in liquidating the Debs Column project.

Altman did not want the Debs Column. He was forced to create it as left coloration in his struggle against our 'Arms for Spain' campaign. We did not want it because it raised our campaign to a high political plane; to a head-on struggle with the centrists and the right-wing over the Spanish Revolution. This embarrassing unity was solved by Altman's strangulation of the Column while we covered him by launching into a juridical campaign on the Moscow Trials and remained silent on the Column. (Comrade Burham confirmed this at a correspondents meeting early in May - "It would have been a mistake if we did not allow the Debs Column to drop.")

In connection with the Column, it must be remembered that altho Siegel refused to send men to Spain because they demanded to be sent to Barcelona instead of Madrid, we did not protest or attempted to dispute the issue. Even Harry Milton's letter which reads in part "I hope no Trotskyites were among them; if such is the case organize memorial services for the dead.." proved unable to stir the leadership into a struggle on this issue.

During the interim between the formation of the Column and the Chicago Convention, a number of comrades presented statements to the leadership in N. Y. (Appeal) These statements all dealt with our failure to recognize the Spanish issue and proposed an immediate campaign. To our knowledge, a request was made by one comrade for permission to appear before the leadership to discuss the issue together with another comrade who shared his views. This was denied.

The slogan 'Arms For Spain' is a centrist slogan. The slogan should have been: 'Arms for the Spanish Workers'.

When comrade Cannon arrived from California he was first seen and heard by all the comrades at an Appeal meeting where he proposed the liquidation of caucuses. One week before the Convention, a meeting of the correspondents was held on March 20th. Comrades Burnham and Shachtman were conspicuously absent; the main report was made by comrade Spector, while comrade Cannon restricted himself to a few remarks.

Comrade Cannon began his short speech with a little humor. He said: "We are advancing with seven league boots... we are going to take over the Party." Then getting down to bed-rock, he began to hammer out the line. "We must liquidate the factional atmosphere, we must have peace in the Party." As an interesting sidelight, he let us in on a little secret; he had made a little deal with Thomas. He reported that he had assured Thomas that we were going to dissolve the Appeal caucus after the convention; and in return, it seems that we asked for representation on the City Central and the City Executive Committees. (As is well known, we never received this representation for these or any other committees.) When the discussion was opened a number of comrades attacked the leadership for its failure to raise the Spanish issue, and demanded that immediate action be taken on this question. As Spector was about to sum up, Cannon asked for the floor. He began by reiterating the necessity for liquidating the factional atmosphere and establishing peace. In reply to Salemm, who in the discussion stated that the line of peace advanced by the leadership was "a demand for a blank for a second entry", comrade Cannon said: "Yes comrades, in a certain sense it is another entry. And in a certain sense we are asking for a blank check. We asked for one in the past and we got it..." Then he answered the question as to why he had announced at the Laidler membership meeting that he was for the liquidation of the Appeal and other caucuses, by explaining that it was a matter of time. He dwelt at great length on the point that time is one of the most decisive factors in politics. Then getting to the gist of the matter, the question that everyone was waiting for him to tackle, he said: "About Spain, I can't say much because I'm uninformed and haven't given it much thought." (!!) As a justification, he added: "When one is away from the Center one tends to pay less attention to highly political questions." We forget whether it was before or after his 'remarks' on Spain that he said the following: "We must build up the authority of the leadership so that the SP'ers will have something to come to in the future." (!)

The Spanish Revolution is the central issue of the day. On the central issue of the day, the question to which all other issues in the revolutionary movement lead, comrade Cannon, the ideological leader of our American movement, pleads ignorance! The leader of a movement which maintains that the fate of the Soviet Union and the international proletariat will be settled by the revolution in Western Europe, pleads ignorance of the tasks arising from the advent of the revolution we had been expecting for years as the turning point in the long series of defeats of the international proletariat, and the degeneration of the first workers' state. To put it mildly, anyone who believes that comrade Cannon was "uninformed," is naive. Comrade Cannon was not only informed but he refused to comment or express any opinions on the Spanish issue because he, together with the rest of the leadership, had a line of ignoring the Spanish issue; the line of no political struggle, of "penetration," and of "peace" at any cost.

The most serious and vital responsibility which history placed before us was the task of taking a complete and uncompromising revolutionary position on the Spanish Revolution. Had we gone to the Convention with a complete and revolutionary program on Spain and had we conducted an uncompromising struggle for its adoption, we

would have fulfilled our duties as revolutionary internationalists seriously concerned about their obligations to the Spanish proletariat. But at the Convention the leadership did not make the Spanish Revolution its main issue. It reduced its main task to maneuvering with the centrists, which it did until it had worked itself to the bone. And of what importance is the Spanish Revolution when Zam and Tyler are begging for a pow-wow? Certainly no more than a little fracas in Western Europe. After all, we have to make a deal with the centrists, and if we take an intransigent position it might ruin our chances of striking a bargain with them as we did with Thomas. Besides, as Sam Gordon put it: "We don't limit ourselves just to agitation for the Spanish Revolution, we fight for the World Revolution."

Let us sum up our activity on the Spanish issue at the Convention. After the Appeal resolution was defeated, - a resolution which by no means can be regarded as being free from centrist formulation- we voted for a so-called Clarity sub-committee, on the basis of the ClaritySpanish resolution, to draw up a position on the most vital question of the day. In Burnham's letter to Trimble, dated May 17th., we find the following: "As you know, a sub-committee had been appointed in Chicago to draw up a resolution on Spain. This consisted of: Tyler, Zam, Siegal, Romer (who had left the country), and Allen (who was perhaps added in Phila., - I'm not sure). During the six weeks since Chicago, this sub-committee 'had not had time' to prepare its resolution. Indeed it did not 'find time to complete it' until the closing hours of the Phila. meeting." Burnham discreetly skips over the fact that we shirked the responsibility which History placed upon us at the Convention by entrusting it to "Tyler, Zam, Siegal, Romer (who had left the country), and Allen (who was perhaps added in Phila.)..."

Thus, in part, the responsibility for the NEC Spanish resolution devolves on us. For it must not be forgotten that we voted to have a sub-committee draw up a resolution on Spain. Our actions at the Convention were the logical culmination of the line of "peace in the Party." Objectively, our strategy at the Convention reduced itself to injecting a little 'leftism' into the centrist positions that were up for adoption. We imparted to the Convention the much needed left coloration, and left the door open to further "peaceful penetration."

After the Convention was over, a membership meeting of the Appeal was called for the purpose of reporting on the Convention and to propose further action; this was one week after the Convention. The action proposed by the leadership, was dissolution of the ~~of the~~ Appeal caucus. This action was delayed until the following week because after comrade Burnham's presentation of the Spanish and Moscow Trials issues, the opposition to the dissolution of the caucus was reenforced by the opposition that developed to his presentation of the issues. And the leadership's proposal for dissolution would have been accepted, if the motion had been put and carried, only over a great deal of opposition & dissatisfaction.

For years, in all the languages of the world in which Trotskyist literature is published, it has been repeated, emphasized, and driven home to the reader, that the fate of the Soviet Union and the international proletariat will be settled by the revolution in Western Europe. But at this meeting of the Appeal caucus, Comrade Burnham turned this conception on its head and declared that the fate of the Spanish revolution will be settled in Moscow! His exact words were: "Spain is the

backyard of Moscow". The conception that the revolution in Western Europe would settle the fate of the Soviet Union was too well ingrained in the blood of the comrades for them to passively accept its opposite, and, the open declaration to ignore the Spanish Revolution and to orientate ourselves towards a purely legalistic struggle on the Moscow Trials created greater confusion and dissention. In view of the fact that the leadership had been following a policy of maneuvering on the top with the centrists, of refusing to conduct a political struggle on the Spanish issue, of accepting gag-laws, of maintaining an iron determination not to allow the ranks to influence their policy, all of this meant, after Burnham's frank report, that there could be no question of a campaign on Spain. (The line was "peace" in the Party.)

At the following Appeal meeting held a week later, unlike the previous meeting, a statement calling for the dissolution of the caucus and dealing with the Convention, the Moscow Trials, and Spain, was submitted to the membership for acceptance. Verbal promises were made that as soon as the hearings in Mexico were over we would start a campaign on Spain. One has only to re-read the statement to see that in reality it guaranteed the line of "peace" being continued and not a campaign on Spain.

The statement hails the Convention as a leftward(!) step, protests the banning of inner-Party organs, calls upon the Party to launch a sharp counter-offensive against the Stalinists on the issue of the Trials, and "also calls upon the Party and all members to intensify our activities in behalf of the Spanish Revolution, in which we (the Party or the appeal? - our insertion) have been inexcusably remiss in the past".

The comrades who voted for the dissolution of the caucus fell into the trap laid for them by the leadership when it declared that "the dissolution of the caucus is not a principled question". In reality, the principled question, was then and is today: an uncompromising struggle on the basis of a complete program on Spain, or, capitulation to the centrists. A 'truce' was established and this meant, politically, a capitulation to the centrists. (We will show that the leadership did not voluntarily change its line of "peace" because it decided that it was time to rectify its capitulation and raise the Spanish issue as it should have long ago, but that this change was forced upon it against its will.)

The Philadelphia meeting of the NEC was held during the Barcelona events. Novack reported to the NEC on the Moscow Trials and the American Committee for the Defense of L. Trotsky for almost two hours. Burnham and the other leaders have made a great point of the fact that the NEC, meeting under the very shadow of the Barcelona events, found almost no time to discuss these events. What righteous demagoguery! We found ways and means to have Novack present to discuss the Trials for almost two hours, but no mention is made of the fact that we, for one reason or another, reasons which have yet to be advanced by the leadership, found no time to speak on the Barcelona events!

The NEC resolution on Spain is a perfect gem from the arsenals of centrism. It calls for Soviets, for the establishment of Socialism, and ends by stating: "We are firmly opposed to insurrections against the government over differences of policy in this period of civil war. We are likewise opposed to repressive methods by the government against any working class organization.." When it comes to the realm of deeds

however, it is another matter. In a statement on the North American Comm. for the Defense of Spanish Democracy published together with the Spanish resolution, we find the following: "In accordance with the principles of united front activity, we direct our party members to refrain from all attacks upon the Spanish Government or any of the other anti-fascist forces fighting Franco and to insist that the speakers representing other elements in the N.A.C. do the same, provided, however, that our speakers shall have the right to explain the Socialist position on Spain within the rights of the United Front. We direct our locals where they have not already done so to undertake to set up a local organization of the N.A.C. where no such local organization is in existence. Nothing in this resolution shall prevent independent Socialist Party activity on behalf of Spain in all localities where such independent activities is feasible and likely to be effective."

Of course the comrades understand that Thomas, Zam, Tyler and the rest are centrists, of that they need no persuasion. But how does our leadership respond to the statement on the N.A.C.? The instructions issued to the comrades are: "In accordance with the NEC resolution, we go into the NAC to build it up, but we fight for our position within it." (J. Carter -verbally.) We are opposed to "building" an organization that stands for "democracy vs. fascism" and, is a stooge organization of the Stalinists who use it to materially and politically strengthen the counter-revolution. Why doesn't our leadership come out and tell us to build the American League Against War and Fascism? If the S.P. had endorsed the American League, would our leadership also accept this position without a fight and instruct us to "build" it?

The centrists capitulated to the right when they issued their statement on the N.A.C. For us to remain silent, to passively accept this position, to avoid a struggle on this issue, is, despite the best intentions in the world, not merely a capitulation to the centrists, it is criminal capitulation to Stalinism. (The centrists capitulated to the right-wing, the right-wing to the Stalinists.) It is the logical outcome of refusing to face the central issue of the day: taking a revolutionary position on the Spanish Revolution and fighting for it against all the multi-shades of reformism in the labor movement.

As long as we refuse to face the Spanish Revolution and orientate ourselves towards a struggle on this issue, our capitulation to centrism will continue. We can prattle all we like about 'peace', no political struggle, "liquidate the factional atmosphere", as Cannon and the entire leadership did, but, the objective situation will drive us to newer and bigger capitulation unless we break with the line of refusing to struggle on the Spanish issue, and, unless we repeal our Indiana resolution which has been our only reply to the NEC Spanish resolution.

Despite all the titanic efforts of the leadership to maintain "peace", the liquidation of the caucus, the giving up of the Appeal, remaining silent on the Spanish issue, limiting our struggle on the Moscow Trials to a juridical dissertation from the outside, submitting to the demand of the City Executive that we break up the united front of the East Side branch with the Anarchists, etc.; despite all this and more, "peace" could not be maintained! So long as there are political differences, peace cannot be established without burying the political differences.

History intervenes, however, and places a limit to 'peace' obtained on the basis of burying the political differences. The objective situ-

which overtook us in the midst of quietly putting the political skeleton in the closet. The Barcelona events galvanized the centrists into swinging to the right. To remain silent after the Barcelona events and the NEC resolution, coming as they did, one month after the last meeting of the Appeal caucus where the leadership promised to launch a campaign on Spain, would have meant political suicide for the entire leadership and the left-wing. Still clinging to the line of "peace" and unwilling to give it up, the leadership was compelled, nevertheless, to answer the NEC resolution if for no other reason than to hold the ranks together.

Our Indiana resolution, our reply to the NEC resolution, is but a bone taken from the skeleton we pushed into the closet. It is thrown at the centrists to remind them that even though we have buried the political skeleton, we are still dangerous people, we still conduct "educational campaigns". (At the special meeting to discuss Spain, held early this May after the NEC passed its Spanish Resolution, Burnham, in outlining our coming campaign on Spain, emphasized over and over again that: "This campaign must be conducted in accordance with our general strategy. (The strategy was "peace".) On no account must it become agitational; it must be an educational campaign."

But in its haste to capitulate to the centrists for the sake of further "peaceful penetration", the leadership overstepped itself. It committed us, first, on the question of the N.A.C.; and secondly, in the Indiana resolution, to a shamefaced Stalinist position.

An analysis of the position "it is the duty of every worker to give the government all the military support to the extent to which it is conducting the absolutely necessary war against the Fascist barbarians", (quoted from the resolution introduced at the Indiana State Convention by the Appeal group) will reveal a principled deference with revolutionary Marxism.

The position of the right-wing in the S.P. is: material and political support to the Valencia government. The position of Clarity is: material support to the Valencia gov't, and politically, they consider the Valencia gov't. to be a "Provisional Revolutionary gov't." and they oppose insurrections against the gov't, or repressions of the gov't against working class organizations. The position of the Appeal group has been presented to the Party in two documents. We quote from these documents: "Military aid to the Valencia gov't - yes! political support - no! (Statement on NEC - S.P. Spanish Resolution by the Appeal tendency N. Y. YPSL)" "It would, of course, be false for any group to organize an armed struggle to overthrow the People's Front regime at this time, when it is the duty of every worker to give the gov't all the military support to the extent to which it is conducting the absolutely necessary war against the Fascist barbarians. But this military support which revolutionists in particular must give, cannot take the form of political support, or of uncritical support in general." (Resolution of the Ohio State Action Comm., and introduced at the Indiana State Convention by the Appeal Group.)

Thus, all the groups in the Socialist Party stand for material support to the Valencia gov't., altho they differ as to political support.

III

We support the Valencia gov't materially "to the extent to which

it is conducting the absolutely necessary war against the Fascist barbarians." This is one of the crassest expressions in favor of Popular Frontism. The whole root content of the revolutionary opposition to bourgeois coalition is drowned out by the phrase "to the extent to which it (the gov't) is conducting the absolutely necessary war..." Thus it is not the armed proletariat, and the armed proletariat alone, which fights fascism, but it is the bourgeois gov't which is accredited with fighting fascism. That the gov't suppresses the revolutionary workers, dissolves the independent workers' militias into a bourgeois army and on this basis resurrects and stabilizes its tottering rule into a military-police dictatorship and is able to get away with this because Stalinism and social-reformism scream "we must win the war first- all power to the People's Front Gov't.", etc., is lost sight of. Demagoguery is substituted for reality in the words "to the extent to which it conducts the absolutely necessary war..", and naturally the conclusion follows as the subject: We support the gov't, etc.

A few choice quotations from F. Morrow's "The Civil War in Spain" will throw a beacon light on whether the Valencia gov't 'fights' fascism.

"With the posting of election returns, (Feb. 20, 1936) the masses came out on the streets. Within four days of the elections Azana was again at the head of the gov't and again crying for peace, for the workers to go back to work, banishing any spirit of vengeance. Already he was repeating the phrases, and pursuing the policies of 1931-1933!" (p.34)

"When the February (1936) elections approached, the left wing socialists were opposed to a joint election ticket with the Republicans, because they did not believe the Republicans had any real following, and because of the hatred of the masses for these men: Companys' Catalan Esquerra had been guilty of treachery in the October revolt; Martinez Barrios' "Republican Union" was merely the remnant of Lerroux' Radicals, singing a new tune for the occasion; Azana and his Left Republicans had repudiated the October revolt and admittedly were nothing but a handful of intellectuals. The left Socialists were especially outraged when Prieto and the Communist Party agreed to give these Republicans a majority in the joint election tickets; the tickets that carried gave the Republicans 152 deputies to 116 for the workers' organizations" (P 35.)

"The People's Front program was a basically reactionary document:--" (P.36) "For this mess of pottage the workers' leaders abdicated the class struggle against the bourgeois Republic.

Think of it! The very program for the sake of which the Stalinists and Socialists pledged to support the bourgeois republican gov't, made inevitable the onslaught of reaction. The economic foundations of reaction were left untouched, in land, industry, finance, the Church, the army, the State. The lower courts were hives of reaction; the labor press is filled with accounts of fascists caught red-handed and let free, and the workers held on flimsy charges. On the day the counter-revolution broke out, the prisons of Barcelona and Madrid were filled with thousands of political prisoners - workers, especially from the C.N.T., but also many from the U.G.T. The administrative bureaucracy was so rotten with reaction that it fell apart on July 18. The whole diplomatic and consular corps, with a handful of exceptions, went over to the fascists.

The gov't "impartially" imposed a rigid press censorship, modified martial law, prohibition of demonstrations and meetings unless authorized - and at every critical moment authorization was withdrawn. In the critical days after the assassinations of Captain Castillo and Celvo Sotelo, the working class headquarters were ordered closed. The day before the fascist outbreak the labor press appeared with gaping white spaces where the gov't. censorship had lifted out editorials and sections of articles warning of the coup d'etat! In the last 3 months before July 18, in desperate attempts to stop the strike movement, hundreds of strikers were arrested in batches, local general strikes declared illegal and socialist, communist, anarchist headquarters in the regions closed for weeks at a time. Three times in June the Madrid headquarters of the C.N.T. was closed and its leadership jailed." (P.37-38)

"No urging can change the republican bourgeoisie. Such a coalition gov't, committed to maintenance of capitalism, must act as Azana does both in 1931 and in 1936. The gov't behaves identically in both cases because its program is one of building a Spanish economy under capitalism. That means: it cannot touch the economic foundations of reaction because it does not want to destroy capitalism. Azana's basic program is put succinctly enough in two phrases soon after he came back to power: 'No vengeance'; 'Gil Robles too will one day be an Azanista.'" (p.39)

"The People's Front gov't., that is to say, the gov't. of the coalition of the workers with the bourgeoisie, is in its very essence a government of capitulation to the bureaucracy and the officers. Such is the great lesson of the events in Spain, now being paid for with thousands of human lives' (Trotsky)" (p.39)

"In Albacete province, near Yeste, the peasants seized a big estate. On May 28, 1936, they were attacked by the Civil Guard. The press correctly termed the situation a repetition of that in the Casas Viejas massacre of 1933. The interpellations in the Cortes on June 5th, were awaited with bated breath... but the communist and socialist deputies proceeded to absolve the government of all responsibility." (p. 39-40)

"The construction workers of Madrid, over 80,000 strong, went on strike, their main demand being a 30 hour week. The government ordered the workers to arbitrate; and decided on a 40 hour week. The U.G.T. and the Communists agreed and ordered their followers to return to work. The C.N.T., however, refused to accept the government settlement and, what is more, the U.G.T. workers followed the anarchists." (p.40)

"Fortunately for the future of the Spanish and the international working class,....."(p.42)

And so forth and so on ! We refer the comrades especially to Chapters VI and VII (p.42-53). In line after line, Morrow shows how the government attempted to suppress strikes, censored proletarian papers, arrested workers while allowing fascists to go scot free, shot down peasants who siezed the landowners estates, and finally, even tried to keep the news of the fascist insurrection from the masses; when Franco was already marching, the "anti-fascist (&) government categorically refused to arm the proletariat - the proletariat armed itself and formed its own workers' militias.

If the Valencia government is really capable of fighting fascism, then it follows that bourgeois coalition governments are still historically progressive. It also follows that if Fascism destroys Bourgeois Democracy, Bourgeois Democracy can, conversely, destroy Fascism; therefore the Stalinist slogan of "Democracy vs Fascism" would be correct. One may argue: but the trouble is that the Valencia gov't. does not fight fascism the way we would like it to fight. Then of

course the conclusion is inescapable: - cooperate with it, help it, join it, lead it, and it will then carry out a better fight. Thus the conclusion is, not that the capitalist People's Front government is counter-revolutionary to the core and that it hides its reactionary rule behind "anti-fascist" phrases which cost it nothing, but that it is still an instrument (not a very good one to be sure) which the masses can use in the struggle against fascism.

The weasel words, "to the extent to which" or "in so far as", plainly give the game away. Either the government is a workers' government and can and does fight fascism all the way, or, it is a bourgeois counter-revolutionary government maintaining its power over and against the masses to frustrate and defeat at every step their fight against fascism. Between these two roads there is no middle of the way. The same government cannot be both "anti-fascist" and counter-revolutionary at the ~~the~~ same time. But the words "to the extent to which" straddle the barricades and make out of the rotten Valencia-Barcelona regime a hybrid of the two classes with "anti-fascist tendencies" dominant over counter-revolutionary ones. The gov't fights fascism only "to the extent to which" and to that extent we are asked to support it with arms. What about the "to the extent to which" the gov't betrays and sabotages the struggle against fascism, shouldn't we disarm it? etc. - no that is conveniently forgotten.

This fake centrist phraseology which ascribes to the People's Front gov't dual features, i.e. credits it with being forty (?) or sixty (?) percent "anti-fascist" in order to hide its actual 100 percent counter-revolutionary role, serves the purpose of sneaking in the actual People's Front program in full and preventing the advanced workers from carrying on the revolutionary struggle against it. "The Soviets, i.e., the S.-R's and Mensheviks predominating in it, allowed themselves to be tamed by agreeing, immediately after the formation of the Provisional Government of the capitalists, to 'support it', in so far as it carried out its promises"... (Lenin, Toward the Seizure of Power, Book 1, P. 85)

'But we don't support the government politically - we oppose it politically. We point out that the People's Front government shoots down workers who raise the slogan of a Socialist Spain, engineers plots to frame-up the Anarchists, POUM, Bolshevik-Leninists, etc. etc. After thus attacking politically the People's Front government, we then proceed to positive action and declare that the workers must give military aid (arms, etc.) to the People's Front gov't.

Only an incorrigible centrist who masks his popular frontism will maintain that arming a capitalist government is merely a matter of tactics separate and apart from political support.

Some sincere comrades actually believe the nonsense that if and when the slogan of "material aid" is raised, there is tacked on the additional phrase, "but no political support", they are siding the class struggle here and in Spain. Any sober Marxist politician knows that aid or power for any gov't, consists of economic wealth and military ordinance. We also know that in a revolutionary situation the propertyless proletariat has power when it is united under a Marxist leadership and has arms in its hands. "Material aid" is one of the best forms of aid (or support) any gov't can receive. Those who take the position of "Material aid but no political support to the Loyalist gov't" show that in reality their line leads them, objectively, to

aiding in the best manner the capitalist Spanish gov't. Do we aid the Bourgeois Loyalist gov't, or do we prepare for its overthrow by sending "Material aid but no political support" to the counter-revolutionists? Obviously, we aid the gov't, maintain its rule over the proletariat.

We oppose this government but we proceed to give it arms. Now the giving of arms to any government is determined, by a political interest in the maintenance and preservation of any government that one proceeds to arm. To revolutionary Marxists, it is clear beyond any question that the most advanced form of political support which the Social-Democrats could have given and actually gave the imperialists during the last world war was to vote war credits and in other ways support the armament program of their respective capitalist governments. Giving arms to a bourgeois gov't, in spite of all the ugly names one may call it, is the clearest and decisive kind of political support (certainly more meaningful than ballots) and especially since one arms it even while one calls it bad names. It is political support to capitalism covered by "critical" demagoguery.

"We don't support the gov't politically... we support it materially." This proposition can be understood much better if it is separated into the two questions it is based on. First, "Do we support the Valencia gov't?" Second, "What form of aid do we render this Government?"

Obviously, the answer one gives to the second question must logically flow from one's position on the first question. For example, with respect to Gen. Franco's Fascist gov't, our position is unequivocal. We state openly our principled opposition to it and we proceed to the task, not of arming it, but of smashing it. With respect to the People's Front gov't, those who call for giving this gov't, all forms of material aid, must logically be obliged to answer the first question as follows: "Yes, we support the gov't..." (we will omit here all the decorations and qualifications which they proceed to hang onto this clear, affirmative reply.) The answer to the second question flows from the first somewhat as follows: "We call upon the workers to give arms etc. to the Valencia gov't."

How would revolutionary Marxists respond to the first question? We would unequivocally answer: "No - we do not support the People's Front government; on the contrary, we are irreconcilably opposed to it; more, we are for its overthrow and for replacing it with a proletarian dictatorship."

Naturally, our answer to the second question - "What form of aid do we render this bourgeois government?" - is made mandatory by our response to the first question. We would be duty bound to elaborate on our first reply somewhat as follows: "We do not proceed to give arms to the Valencia gov't, but to take the arms away from the gov't, and arm the independent workers' militias, defense committees, councils, etc. More, we draw the proletariat increasingly towards our revolutionary program of struggle against capitalism in all its forms. We expose the government's sabotage of the workers' struggle against fascism. We raise positive revolutionary slogans to win the workers to our side and against the government. We organize workers', peasants, and soldiers councils today, to prepare to displace and overthrow the government tomorrow!!!" Our opposition to the government in practice corresponds in every way to our principled political opposition to Popular Frontism.

"In the case where a struggle against a common enemy exists, a

special kind of alliance is unnecessary. As soon as it becomes necessary to fight such an enemy directly, the interests of both parties fall together for the moment... And then, as soon as victory has been decided, the petty-bourgeoisie will endeavor to annex it for themselves. They will call upon the workers to keep the peace and return to their work in order to avoid (so-called) excesses and then proceed to cut the workers off from the fruits of victory....

"During the struggle and after the struggle, the workers at every opportunity must put up their own demands in contradistinction to the demands put forward by the bourgeois democrats... They must check as far as possible all manifestations of intoxication for the victory and enthusiasm for the new state of affairs, and must explain candidly their lack of confidence in the new gov't, in every way through a cold-blooded analysis of the new state of affairs. They must simultaneously erect their own revolutionary workers' executive committees, community councils, worker's clubs or workers' committees, so that the bourgeois democratic government will not only lose its immediate restraint over the workers but, on the contrary, must at once feel itself watched over and threatened by an authority behind which stand the mass of workers. In a word: from the first moment of the victory, and after it, the distrust of the workers must not be directed any more against the conquered reactionary party, but against the previous ally, the petty-bourgeois democrats, who desire to exploit the common victory only for themselves." (Marx, "Address to the Communist League" (1850) Appendix 3 to Engel's "Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany," London, 1933 - Quoted from F. Morrow, The Civil War in Spain p. 20)

Only sophists and phrasemongers will create a Chinese Wall between so-called "political support" and "Material support" with respect to capitalist government. On this basis the most left sounding "opposition" to class-collaboration becomes so much sand thrown into the eyes of the workers and squashes the revolutionary struggle against capitalism.

The program summed up in the phrase "But this military support which revolutionists in particular must give, cannot take the form of uncritical support in general" (quotation from Indiana resolution), means in substance nothing else than critical support to the People's Front government. Revolutionary workers can only extend critical support to working class organizations. To extend critical support to a People's Front government is to become a partner to its program and to betray the revolutionary interests of the proletariat!

Moreover, if the People's Front Gov't. is to be supported with arms "to the extent to which it conducts the absolutely necessary war against the Fascist Barbarians", then it follows, that those workers who refuse to follow us in giving such material support to the gov't, and defend themselves against military-police attacks by disarming, and shooting the Assault Guards and the counter-revolutionary officers are playing into the hands of the fascists! One simply cannot be for the arming of the revolutionary workers and call, at the same time, for the shipment of arms to their assassins (the Valencia-Barcelona gov't.) The P.S.U.C. (Stalinist party of Barcelona) makes this quite clear when together with the People's Front bourgeoisie it hatches "plots" and organizes pogroms against the militant workers who oppose its 'democratic' program. They rally the reactionary sections of the petty-bourgeoisie in a campaign to physically exterminate those workers

who exercise control over production and organize workers' councils. Such workers, according to 'Mundo Obrero' and the 'Daily Worker' play the game of Franco, Hitler and Mussolini. The hopeless compromisers stand between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and accuse both the "extreme" wings of disrupting the national front (read- People's Front - our insertion) and rendering assistance to the reaction." (Trotsky, Problems of the Chinese Revolution p.36)

[The centrists and reformists in taking the position of "material and moral aid" to the Loyalist gov't, forget another important point which is A B C with revolutionary Marxists. The Valencia gov't, is a bourgeois state standing in defense of private property, colonial exploitation, 'law and order', the Constitution, Democracy, etc., etc. This gov't has arrested revolutionary workers, protected bourgeois elements from the justifiable terror of the masses, etc., and recently has shot down revolutionary workers who demand an end with Coalitionism, socialization of the basic means of production and control over their own armed forces as the only means of defeating fascism. Yesterday, the gov't stood on the opposite side of the barricades shooting down these revolutionary workers of Catalonia. We stand with the class-conscious workers against the counter-revolutionary bourgeois gov't. We ask the centrists (i. e., the hidden People's Fronters): Do you advocate material aid to the Noske butchers of the revolutionary proletariat? Which side of the barricades are you sending aid to?

The masses in this country support the Valencia gov't because they are blinded by the purely military aspect of the struggle. It is our duty to break down this illusion. Our present line, however, prevents us from doing this. Theoretically we hold the position that the People's Front cannot fight fascism; we criticise it "politically" because its program is liberal-capitalist, it therefore cannot fight fascism, and then we proceed to tell those very workers who have heard our criticisms to send all material aid to this gov't, which we have told them cannot put up an "effective fight." The very posing of the slogan "Material aid but no political support" befuddles the workers into thinking that the People's Front can fight fascism - otherwise why should we ask them to send it aid! The workers in the U.S.A. will only be confused into supporting the People's Front by such centrist slogans.

Some comrades object and say: "True, the People's Front cannot fight fascism. But don't the workers at the front need arms and aren't they fighting fascism?" A concrete examination of the situation in Spain will show that the workers are under the forcible control of and are organized by, the liberal capitalist gov't, and its 'radical' supporters. Because the Spanish proletariat may for the moment support the gov't politically and materially is no reason why we Marxists should support it. Suppose at the outbreak of a war the workers may be temporarily blinded into supporting 'their' imperialist gov't., should Marxists therefore also support the gov't.? Such a position is the height of opportunism and treachery! Trotsky has this to say about a situation where the proletariat may "support" its ruling class. "The fact that the big bourgeoisie, represented by Chiang Kai Shek, needs to break with the proletariat, and the revolutionary proletariat on the other hand needs to break with the bourgeoisie, is not an evidence of their solidarity, but of the irreconcilable class antagonism between them." (Problems of the Chinese Rev. p. 66) All the arms we can send the Spanish masses will not defeat Gen. Franco so long as they remain under the control of the Caballeros, Negrins, Hernandezes, and Masjas. To-day with the liquidation of the workers' militias, the Loyalist army is in essence a bourgeois army -with all that this term implies.

We do not send arms to workers in a bourgeois army simply because the workers in it are being misled. If the French workers go to war tomorrow against Germany "to fight fascism and to preserve the French Popular Front and its social reforms" we Marxists stand for no material aid to these workers in the French army. We have the same problem to face to-day as Lenin and the Bolsheviks faced in 1917. Lenin has established a valuable precedent for us in such situations. At all times Lenin was against material or political support to the liberals of all shades. And at the same time he was for support only of the workers' own militia and arms. During the Kerensky period Lenin wrote that "For an effective struggle against the Czarist monarchy, for a real assurance of liberty not only in words, not in elegant promises of the rhetoricians of liberalism, the workers must not support the new gov't but the gov't must 'support' the workers. For the only guarantee of freedom and of the final destruction of Czarism is the arming of the proletariat, the consolidation, the extension, the development of the role, the significance, and the power of the workers' and peasants' Soviets. Everything else is phrases and lies of the politicians in the liberal and radical camps who are deceiving themselves. Support the arming of the workers or at least do not obstruct this affair and freedom in Russia will be invincible, the monarchy irretrievable, the republic assured. Otherwise the people will be deceived. Promises are cheap. They cost nothing. All the bourgeois politicians in all the bourgeois revolutions have 'fed' the people with promises and stupefied the workers. Our revolution is a bourgeois revolution, therefore the workers must support the bourgeoisie; that is what the worthless politicians from the camp of the liquidators say. Our revolution is a bourgeois revolution, say we, the Marxists; therefore the workers must open the eyes of the people to the deception of the bourgeois politicians, must teach them to put no trust in words, to rely only upon THEIR OWN forces, ITS OWN organization, ITS OWN unity, ITS OWN arms." (Lenin, Vol. XLV, part 1, pages 10-11, Pravda, March 21, 1917 Quoted from Trotsky, Problems of the Chinese Rev. p. 32.)

During the Kornilow revolt, Lenin advocated the same position. Speaking about 'Rumors of a Conspiracy' to send reactionary Cossack units to Moscow and rumors of Bolsheviks giving access to S.R.'s and Mensheviks to enter Bolshevik military forces in order for them (S.R.'s and Mensheviks) to mobilize the soldiers for a struggle against the Cossecks, he said: "Even under such conditions this is what a Bolshevik would say: 'Our workers and soldiers will fight against the counter-revolutionary troops if they start an offensive against the Provisional Government; they will not defend this gov't, which called for Kaledin and Co. on July 16th, but they will INDEPENDENTLY defend the revolution while pursuing their own aims, the aims of securing a victory for the workers, a victory for the poor, a victory for the cause of peace, and not a victory for the imperialists, for Kerensky, Avksentyew, Tsereteli, Skobelev and Co.' Even under the exceptionally unlikely circumstances here assumed, a Bolshevik would say to the Mensheviks: 'Of course we shall fight, but we shall not agree to the smallest political alliance with you, nor to the least expression of confidence in you - we shall fight in the very same way as the Social-Democrats fought against tsarism in March 1917, together with the Cadets, without entering into any alliance with the Cadets or trusting them for a single second. The least confidence in the Mensheviks would be as much of a betrayal of the revolution now as confidence in the Cadets would have been in 1905 -1917! A Bolshevik would say to the workers and soldiers: 'Let us fight, but not a shadow of confidence in the Mensheviks, if you do not want to be deprived of the fruits of victory!'" (Towards the Seizure of Power,

Book 1, pages 106-107.) Further on he said more emphatically: ("And even now we must not support Kerensky's gov't. This is unprincipled. One may ask: must we not fight against Kornilov? Of course we must! But this is not the same thing; there is a dividing line here; it is being stepped over by some Bolsheviks who call into "conciliation", who allow themselves to be carried away by the flow of events. We will fight, we are fighting against Kornilov, even as Kerensky's troops do, but we do not support Kerensky, On the contrary, we expose his weakness. There is the difference. It is rather a subtle difference, but it is highly essential and one must not forget it." (Towards the Seizure of Power, book 1, page 137) Where did Lenin ever call upon the international proletariat or the Russian, to give "material aid" to the counter-revolutionary Kerensky Liberal Popular Front Democratic - Republican Gov't? Centrists of all shades try to justify their position by mis-interpreting the Bolshevik position in relation to Kerensky and Kornilov.

One of the frequent mis-interpretations and distortions of Lenin is sometimes put in the following two ways: "Lenin supported Kerensky during the Kornilov revolt", or more crudely, "We must make a united front with Negrin and the Loyalist gov't." The other is: "Wouldn't we make a united front even with a William Green, a Mathew Wöll, or a Daniel Tobin if the Labor Movement was attacked?" The first statement we have shown to be false in the preceding paragraph. To the question of a united front with the labor fakers, a question that is always followed by an affirmative reply by the makers of the question, we answer: we are in favor of a united front (if it could possibly be achieved) with the conservative labor bureaucracy in order to defend the interests of the masses and as a method of reaching the masses with our program (in order to tear them away from our 'allies'); but we are against supporting the People's Front gov't, with material aid because it cannot defend the interests of the masses, and most important, the Popular Front gov't, is NOT just another conservative labor organization but it is a Capitalist State!

Those who advocate "material aid" to the Loyalist gov't, (some people use a left centrist phrase "arms to Spain") are in reality Left oppositionists of the People's Front. To-day in France a left winger would refuse to vote for the war budgets, conscription, etc., of the Popular Front. Yet the inner logic of those who hold the position of material aid to the Valencia government would be: during times of peace - no support of any sort to the Popular Front; however, if the fascists attack the bourgeois-democratic regime - we favor material aid to the gov't, and will vote for its military budget, etc. And if during this struggle German Imperialism were to step in openly to aid the Doriot and the DeLaRoques and the Popular Front were to declare war against Germany, our 'material aiders' would still be voting war budgets and calling for 'aid' to the Popular Front "to the extent to which" and "in so far as" it fights fascism. Let us repeat again what Lenin said under different circumstances but under almost the same conditions: "The Soviets, i.e. the S.E.'s and Mensheviks predominating in it, allowed itself to be tamed by agreeing, immediately after the formation of the Provisional Gov't, of the capitalists, to 'support it', 'in so far' as it carried out its promises." (p. 86 Ibid). We ask a simple question of the material aiders: you are for material aid to the capitalist gov't in its fight against the 'native' fascists, but what if 'foreign' fascists and your fascists declare war against the Popular Front gov't, which is "fighting fascism"? These people lay the basis for aiding France

against Germany! The Popular Frontists are everywhere social-patriots. The centrists(hidden Popular Frontists) will turn patriotic when war breaks out, it is the logic of their position.

IV

If we call today for the setting up of workers' and peasants soviets, how can we seriously mean what we say when in the next breath we call for military aid to the Valencia government? Perhaps we mean (and let us say so without kidding) that the Valencia government is to be incorporated into the Soviets? Or is it vice versa? Or is the bourgeois to be displaced by the Soviets? The Zam-Tylerites are quite clear on this point. They come out for workers' councils to exist peacefully together with the murderous government at Valencia, which they have named the "Provisional Revolutionary Government". To them 'all is well' with the Soviets and the Government. "And what will be the attitude of the Soviets to the 'government of the revolutionary Kuo Min Tang', allegedly the 'only' governmental authority 'in this region'? A truly classic question. The attitude of the Soviets to the revolutionary Kuo Min Tang will correspond to the attitude of the revolutionary Kuo Min Tang to the Soviets. In other words: to the extent that the Soviets arise, arm themselves, consolidate themselves, they will tolerate over them only such a government as bases itself upon the armed workers and peasants". (Trotsky, Problems of the Chinese Revolution P. 53.) "But even if the Soviets do not carry on a war with the 'only' government of Hankow, will they not still bring with them the elements of dual power? Without a doubt. Whoever is really for the course towards a workers' and peasants' government, not only in words but in deeds, must understand that this course leads through a certain period of dual power. How long this period will last, what concrete forms it will assume, will depend upon how the 'only' government in Hankow conducts itself, upon how rapidly the Soviets develop, etc. It will be our task, in any case, to strengthen the element of the workers and peasants in the dual power and by that provide the genuine workers' and peasants' Soviet government with a fully developed democratic program." (P.56)

But what significance does the slogan "for workers' and peasants' Soviets" bear when we who cry out the slogan, turn our backs to the need of the independent arming of the revolutionary workers who are in opposition to this People's Front Gov't.? "The creation of 'revolutionary peasant committees, workers' trade unions, and other mass organizations as preparatory elements for the Soviets of the future! What should be the course of these organizations? We do not find a single word on this in the theses. The phrase that these are 'preparatory elements for the Soviets of the future' is only a phrase and nothing more. What will these organizations do now? They will have to conduct strikes, boycotts, break the backbone of the bureaucratic apparatus, annihilate the counter-revolutionary bands, drive out the large landowners, disarm the detachment of the usurers and the rich peasants, arm the workers and peasants, in a word, solve all the problems of the democratic and agrarian revolution that are on the order of the day, and in this way raise themselves to the position of local organs of power. But then they will be Soviets, only of a kind that are badly suited to their tasks. The theses therefore propose, if these proposals are to be taken seriously at all, to create substitutes for Soviets, instead of Soviets themselves." (Ibid - p. 57,58)

Do we abide by the formula "arm the government in order that the

revolutionary workers may in turn be armed by the gov't,"? It would appear that such ridiculous nonsense would require no answer other than laughter, yet to-day we are guilty of feeding the class-conscious workers this brand of dope.

The Spanish revolutionary crisis poses our immediate revolutionary task, namely to raise among the class-conscious workers the need for overthrowing the capitalist coalition gov't, in Spain. That is a principled political question with revolutionists.

The moment for the actual seizure of power has obviously not yet arrived in Spain and is a tactical question to be answered eventually by the Spanish workers, for it is determined by a variety of conditions such as the influence of the revolutionary party among the workers, the relationship between the classes, etc., etc. But the proletariat must be orientated towards its historic revolutionary function; the overthrow of capitalism. Marxists do not begin this task by telling the workers to arm and materially strengthen the bourgeoisie they must overthrow. We do not overthrow the bourgeoisie by strengthening it materially when it needs this aid to preserve its rule. No. Revolutionary Marxists must strengthen the material forces of the proletariat and weaken those of the bourgeoisie so that the transfer of power will be assured.

But for us, in the U.S. who face the task of building a revolutionary party and a new International, to fail to pose the need for the revolutionary seizure of power by the proletariat in Spain, would in nowise distinguish us from the fine variations of left centrists who are anxiously seeking recruits.

Furthermore, part of the task of drawing the lessons of the Spanish Revolution consists in dispelling the illusions of Popular Frontism which have already overtaken most of the advanced workers. We cannot begin to do this by calling for material aid to the People's Front Government. Let us leave that task where it properly belongs - to the organizations of the Stalinists, the Old Guard Socialists, Liberals, and the North American Committee for the Defense of Spanish Democracy. (It is no accident that we have adopted the N.E.C. position on the North American Committee. To this day we have not protested (in the branches, the YPSL and Indiana resolutions) or differed on this question with the centrists, the right wing, the NEC, and for that matter the Stalinists. Here the subtle distinction between political and material support to a bourgeois government fall to the ground.)

We must create among the workers both in and outside the S.P. the broadest solidarity with the revolutionary workers of Spain.

The slogans of material aid; including armed aid, should be raised for all those groupings or tendencies which are definitely gravitating towards a complete break with the People's Front and moving towards a full revolutionary position.

In order to carry out this position we propose the following concrete actions:

1. Membership discussion meetings for the purpose of arriving at a correct position on Spain.
2. Campaign for immediate withdrawal from the Stalinist North American Committee to aid Spanish Democracy.
3. Immediate establishment of a national internal Spanish Bulletin for discussion and information purposes.
4. For independent Socialist meetings in solidarity with the Spanish proletariat and against the counter-revolutionary Loyalist gov't.
5. Fulfill the promise made months ago, to send a representative to Spain.

* * * * *

For a Revolutionary Party in Spain!

Against the People's Front!

For the Defense of the Revolution; Against Franco!

No Political or Material Support to the Bourgeois Loyalist Government!

~~For Material Aid to the Revolutionary Workers and Their Organizations!~~

For the Organization of Soviets in the Factories, the Army, the Fleet, and on the land!

For Workers' Control of Production!

All land to the Peasants; Expropriate the landowners and the Church!

For Full Freedom for all Spanish Colonies! *the unity self-determination of all Spanish Colonies*

Disarm the Counter-Revolutionary Officers!

Organize a Workers Militia under control of Soviets!

For a National Congress of Delegates of Local Soviets!

For an Offensive Against Capitalism and all its agents!

For a Revolutionary Dictatorship of the Proletariat based on Soviets of Workers, Soldiers, and Peasants!

For a Rev. 4th International

July 9, 1937.

Submitted to the N.Y. appeal leadership together with a request that this statement be published and distributed to the comrades as a minority position.

M. Joerger
A. Saleme
A. Adler
M. Davis

E. Friend
B. Smith
B. Forbes
S. Fisher
G. Arnold